of 180 per cent and whereas employees working at the lower level are getting only 40 per cent benefit. Something has to be done by the Government. If necessary, it should be revised. For giving benefit, parity should be there. If it is being given on the basis of a percentage, then it should be 100 per cent for all or 40 per cent for all. A Group 'A' officer gets 150 per cent benefit on account of the Pay Commission whereas Group 'C' and Group 'D' people get only 40 per cent? It amounts to discrimination and it requires to be looked into.

Now I come to a very serious issue which is merger of banks. My personal experience as Member of the Lok Sabha earlier and as Member of the Rajya Sabha now is that banks have become state within state. We approached the Central Government and various State Government Departments in the capacity of people's representatives. There may be an issue of loan. There may be an issue of recovery.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Rashtrapal, please. A statement has to be made by the Minister.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Recent Developments in Sri Lanka

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): I rise to apprise this august House of the recent developments in Sri Lanka.

The situation in Sri Lanka is of serious concern to the Government, in particular the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Northern part of Sri Lanka. We are concerned about the plight of the civilians caught in the hostilities and the growing number of internally displaced persons. We have emphasised to the Sri Lankan Government that the safety and the security of the civilians must be safeguarded at all costs and that food and essential supplies be allowed to reach them unhindered. We have been assured that the safety and well being of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka will be taken care of. In this connection, Member of Parliament and Senior Adviser to the President of Sri Lanka, hon. Basil Rajapaksa is due to visit India shortly.

Let me reiterate our conviction that there in no military solution to the ethnic conflict. What is required in Sri Lanka is a peacefully negotiated political settlement within the framework of a united Sri Lanka respecting the legitimate rights of the minorities including the Tamil community. The rights and the welfare of the Tamil community of Sri Lanka should not get enmeshed in the ongoing hostilities against the LTTE. We encourage the Government of Sri Lanka to continue to nurture the democratic process in the Eastern Province as well.

The Government has also taken up with the Sri Lankan Government the need to ensure the safety of our fishermen. While it is important for our fishermen to respect the International Maritime Boundary Line, we have impressed on the Sri Lankan Navy to desist from firing on Indian fishermen. Our two Governments have agreed to work towards concluding practical arrangements to prevent such incidents.

Re: Clarifications with regard to statement by Minister about Development in Sri Lanka

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Clarifications will be later. ...*(Interruptions)*...